



MARVEL

PG 1

# Mystique

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HG Wells

VAUGHAN

LUCAS

DIRECT EDITION



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**THE KREMLIN**  
**MOSCOW**  
**5:24 AM (MSK)**







# DEAD DROP GORGEOUS

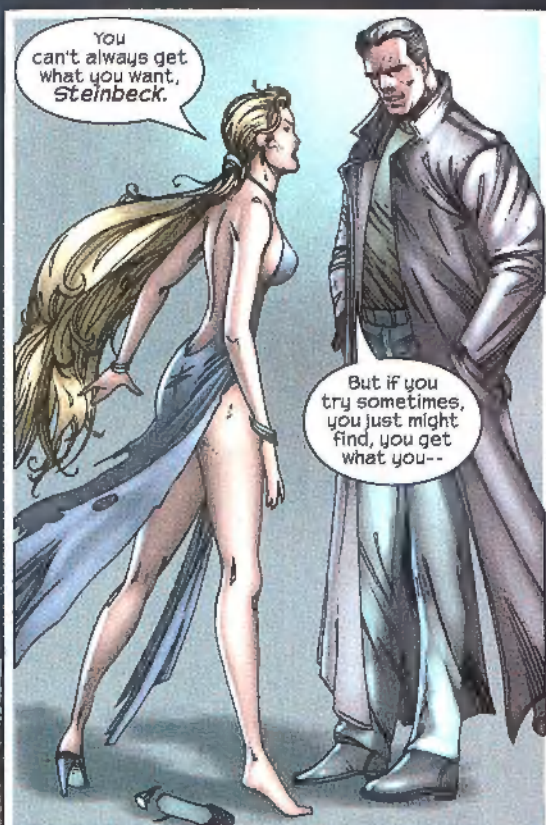
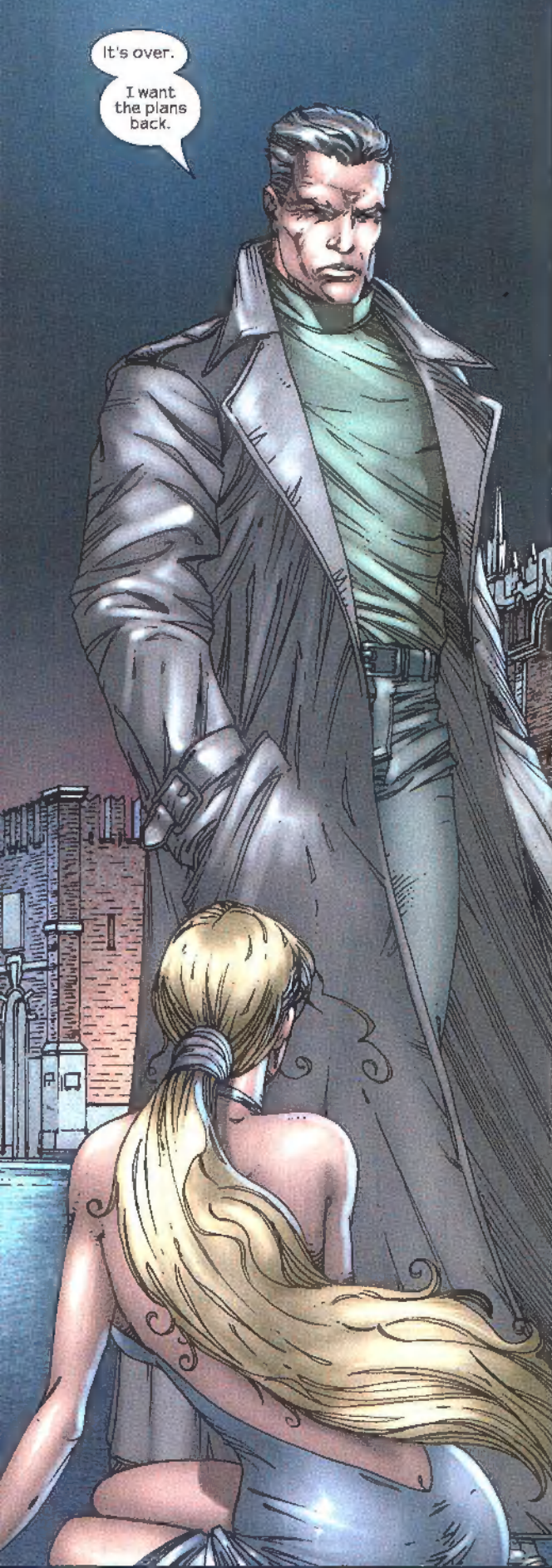
CHAPTER 1 of 6

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I never really liked the Stones... more of a Beatles gal myself.



And you know what the Beatles say about happiness.



You don't have the guts, girlie.

Burn in hell, Steinbeck.



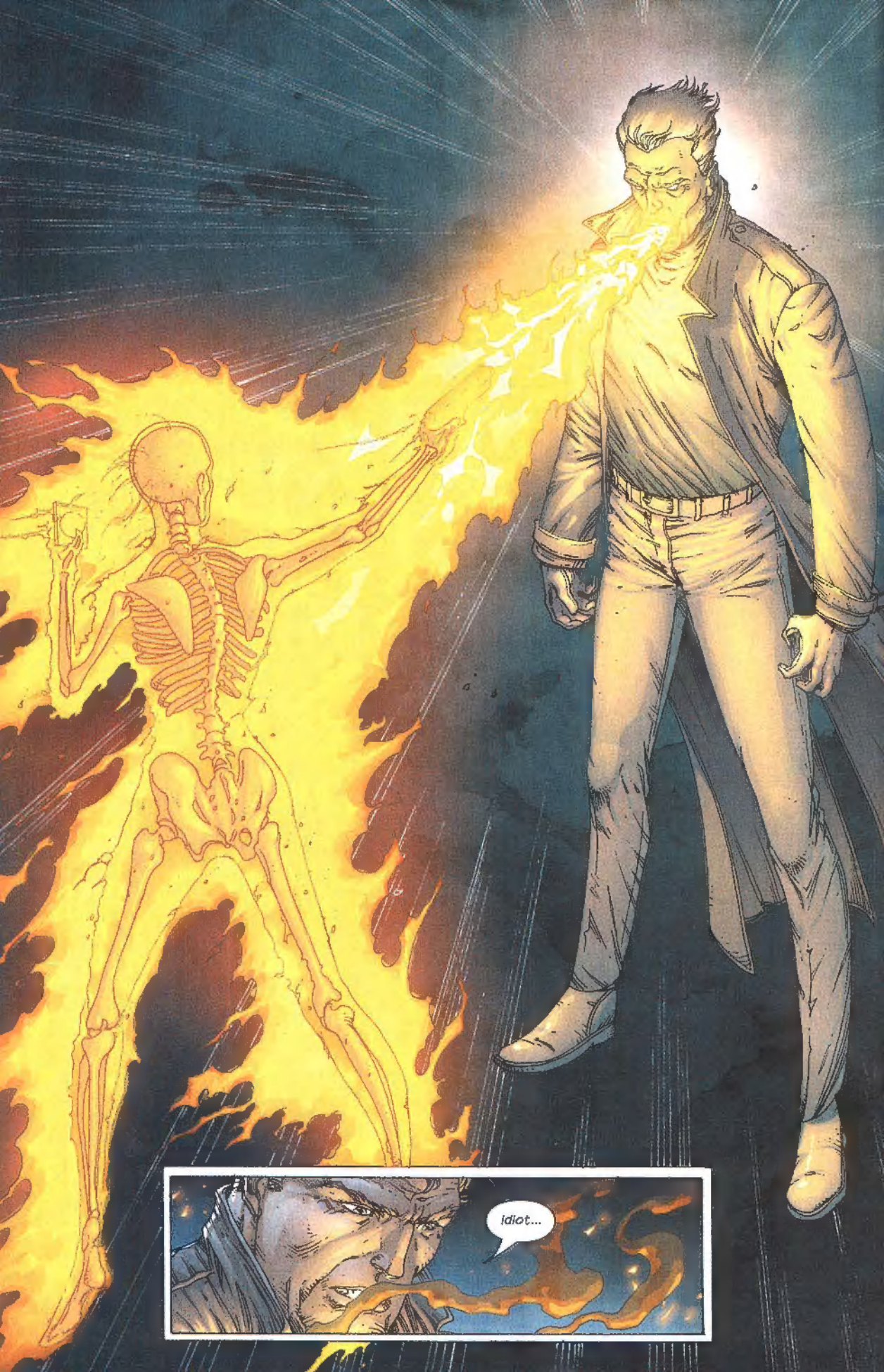
Why go there... when we can all burn here?



NO!

I've got the only disk! You can't--







XAVIER  
INSTITUTE  
FOR  
HIGHER LEARNING

WESTCHESTER,  
NEW YORK  
11:39 PM (EST)

--ning us live via  
satellite is Charles  
Xavier, founder of the  
X-Men and CEO of the  
global X-Corporation.

The leader  
of the "peaceful" mutant  
rights movement, Professor  
Xavier recently revealed  
to the world that he too is  
*Homo superior*, a telepath  
of the highest order.  
Professor, welcome to  
Nightline.

Thank  
you for having  
me, Ted.

Are  
things better  
for mutants  
today than they  
were a year  
ago?

For some,  
but many people  
throughout the world  
remain oppressed  
simply because of the  
unique genetic make-  
up with which they  
were born.

As a  
volunteer rescue  
force, the X-Men  
hope to help offset  
these conditions  
by responding to--

Professor X,  
this is Field Handler  
**Shortpack**! I... I don't  
know if this telepathic  
channel is secure, but  
we have a situation  
in Moscow.

Forgive me,  
Ted. I'm going to have to  
cut our discussion short. My  
apologies to your viewers.





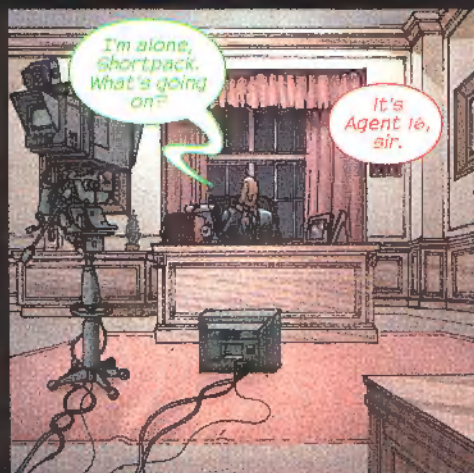
I killed the feed, Professor. Are you all right?

I'm fine, Jean. I just need a moment to myself, please.



Of... of course.

I'll be outside if you need me.



I'm alone, Shortpack. What's going on?

It's Agent 1e, sir.



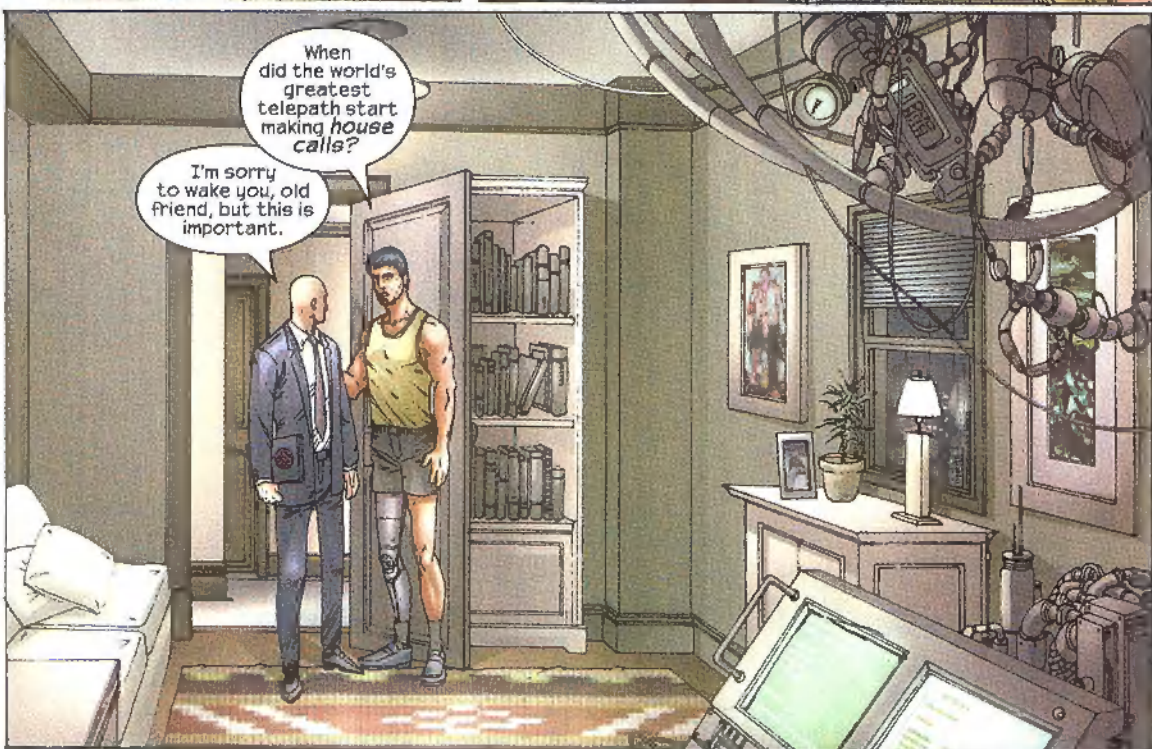
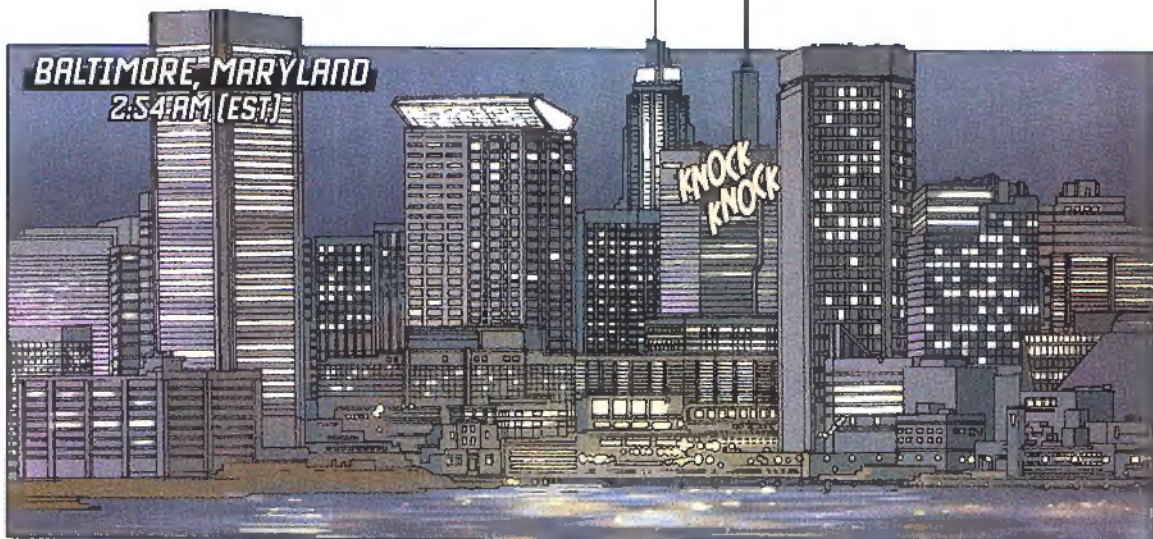
She's dead.

No.

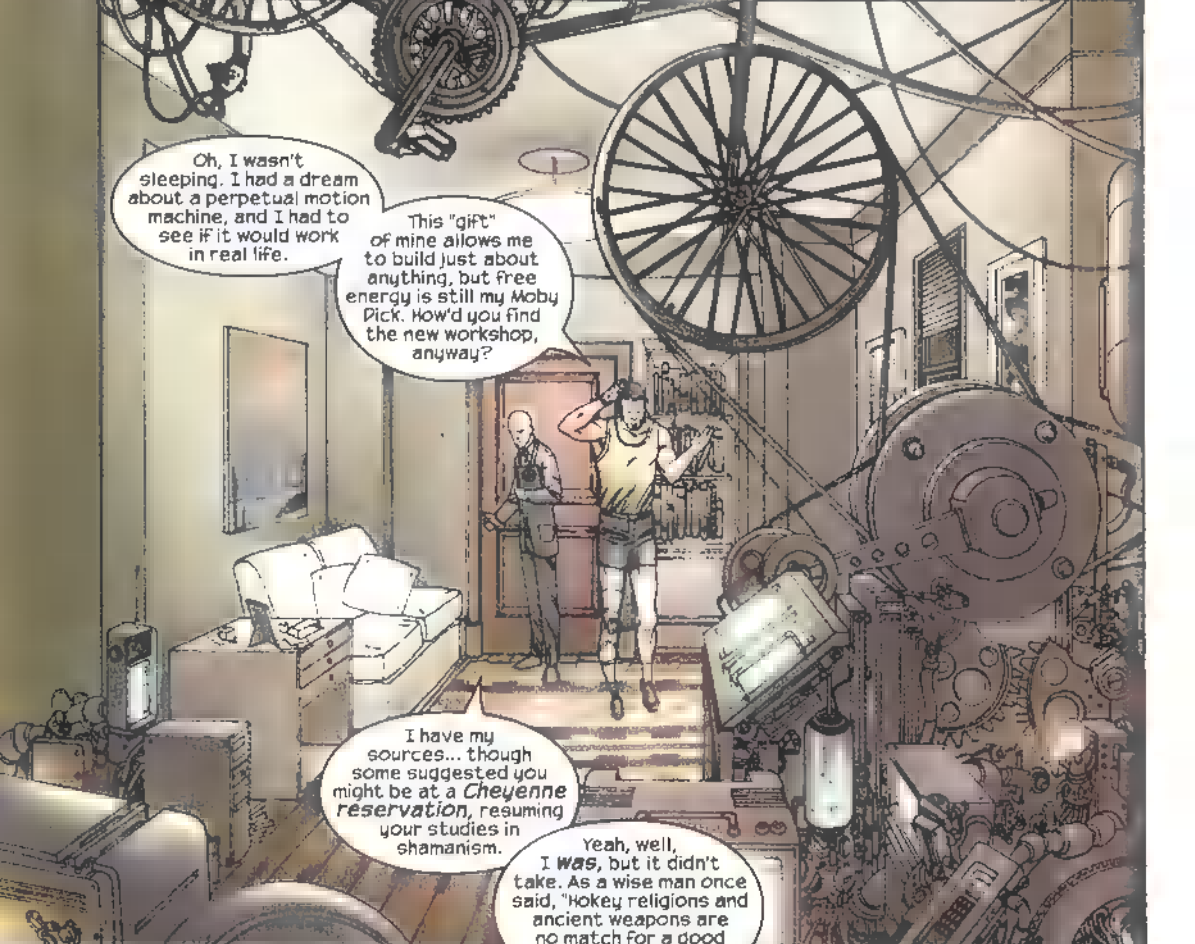


What have I done...?









Oh, I wasn't sleeping. I had a dream about a perpetual motion machine, and I had to see if it would work in real life.

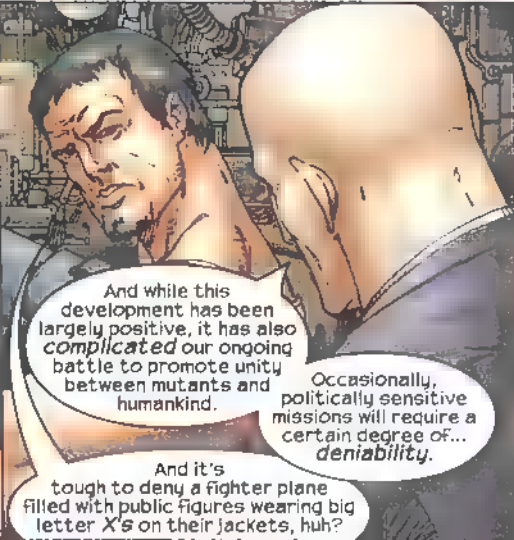
This "gift" of mine allows me to build just about anything, but free energy is still my Moby Dick. How'd you find the new workshop, anyway?

I have my sources... though some suggested you might be at a *Cheyenne* reservation, resuming your studies in shamanism.

Yeah, well, I *was*, but it didn't take. As a wise man once said, "Hokey religions and ancient weapons are no match for a good *blaster* at your side."

But I doubt you gassed up the personal jet to talk *theology* with me.

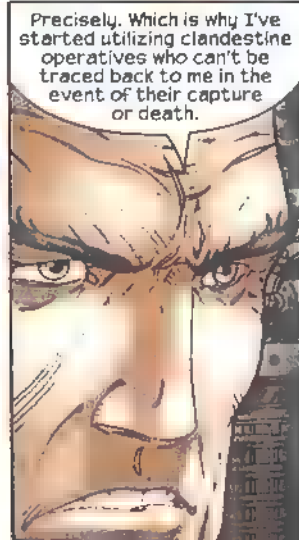
I'm afraid not. As you know, my students and I were recently "outed" as mutants to the world.



And while this development has been largely positive, it has also *complicated* our ongoing battle to promote unity between mutants and humankind.

Occasionally, politically sensitive missions will require a certain degree of... *deniability*.

And it's tough to deny a fighter plane filled with public figures wearing big letter X's on their jackets, huh?

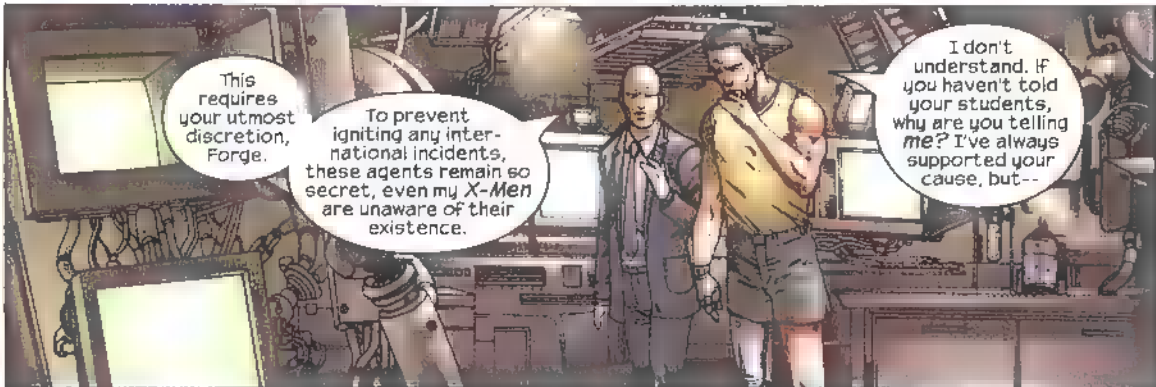


Precisely. Which is why I've started utilizing clandestine operatives who can't be traced back to me in the event of their capture or death.



You mean... *spies*?

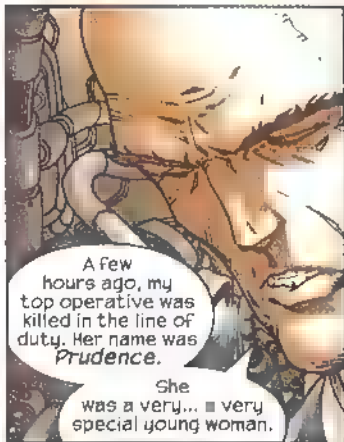




This requires your utmost discretion, Forge.

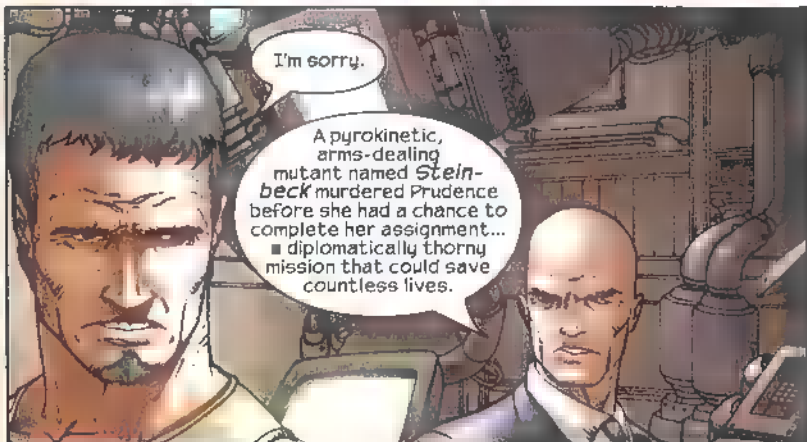
To prevent igniting any international incidents, these agents remain so secret, even my *X-Men* are unaware of their existence.

I don't understand. If you haven't told your students, why are you telling me? I've always supported your cause, but--



A few hours ago, my top operative was killed in the line of duty. Her name was *Prudence*.

She was a very... ■ very special young woman.



I'm sorry.

A pyrokinetic, arms-dealing mutant named *Steinbeck* murdered Prudence before she had a chance to complete her assignment... ■ diplomatically thorny mission that could save countless lives.



I came to you because I need someone who can finish what Prudence started.

Charles, I'm... I'm flattered, but I'm just an aging war vet. I mean, half of my appendages need to be oiled every day.

If you want someone to *invent* stuff for you, I'm your man, but I'd be *useless* in the field.



Actually, I wasn't talking about *you*, Forge...

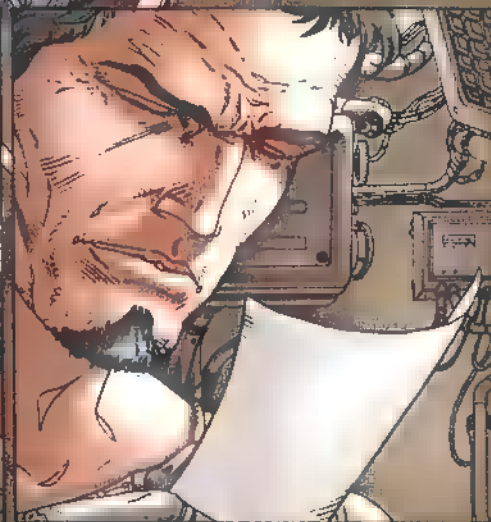


...I was  
talking about  
her.

*Mystique?!*

Are you  
*insane*? She's  
a *terrorist*, a... a  
heartless mercenary  
who only cares  
about her--

You  
loved her  
once, didn't  
you?





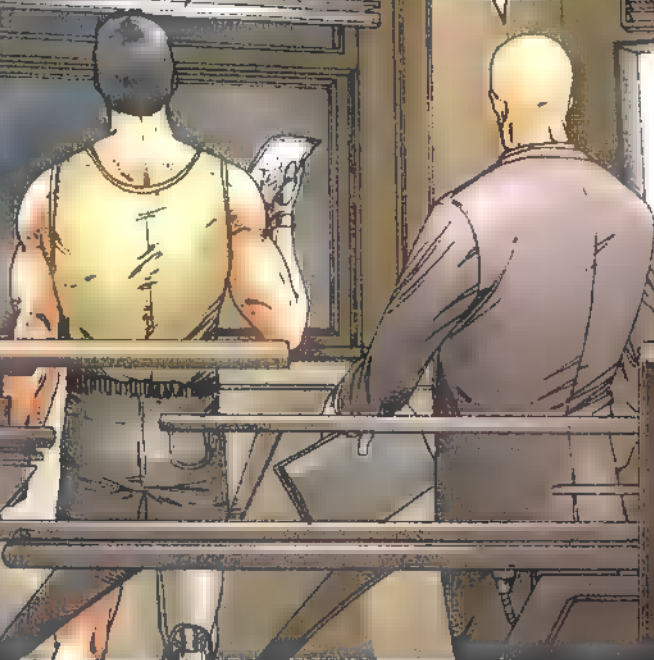


I have the power to fix anything... but I couldn't fix her.

And neither can you, Charles. No one can. *Mystique's a shapeshifter.* There's a reason my people call her kind *tricksters.*

Raven Darkholme may be able to alter her *appearance* a million times a day... but she never really changes.

I have no illusions about the chances of reforming her, Forge. *Mystique is a vicious woman who's hurt people I love.*



Unfortunately, because of her expertise in espionage, she is also the only mutant with the skills and abilities to successfully complete Prudence's mission.

In the process, perhaps she might unwittingly repay society for some of her past crimes.

She'll never agree to help you.

I believe I can make her the proverbial "offer she can't refuse"... but first, I have to *find* her.

*Mystique eludes most conventional forms of detection, and I'm unable to get a telepathic lock on her ever-shifting gray matter.*



As the person who knows her better than anyone, I was hoping *you* might help me locate her.

I don't know what to tell you, Charles. I suppose I'll do what I can, but I haven't heard from *Mystique* in ages.

She could be *anywhere...*

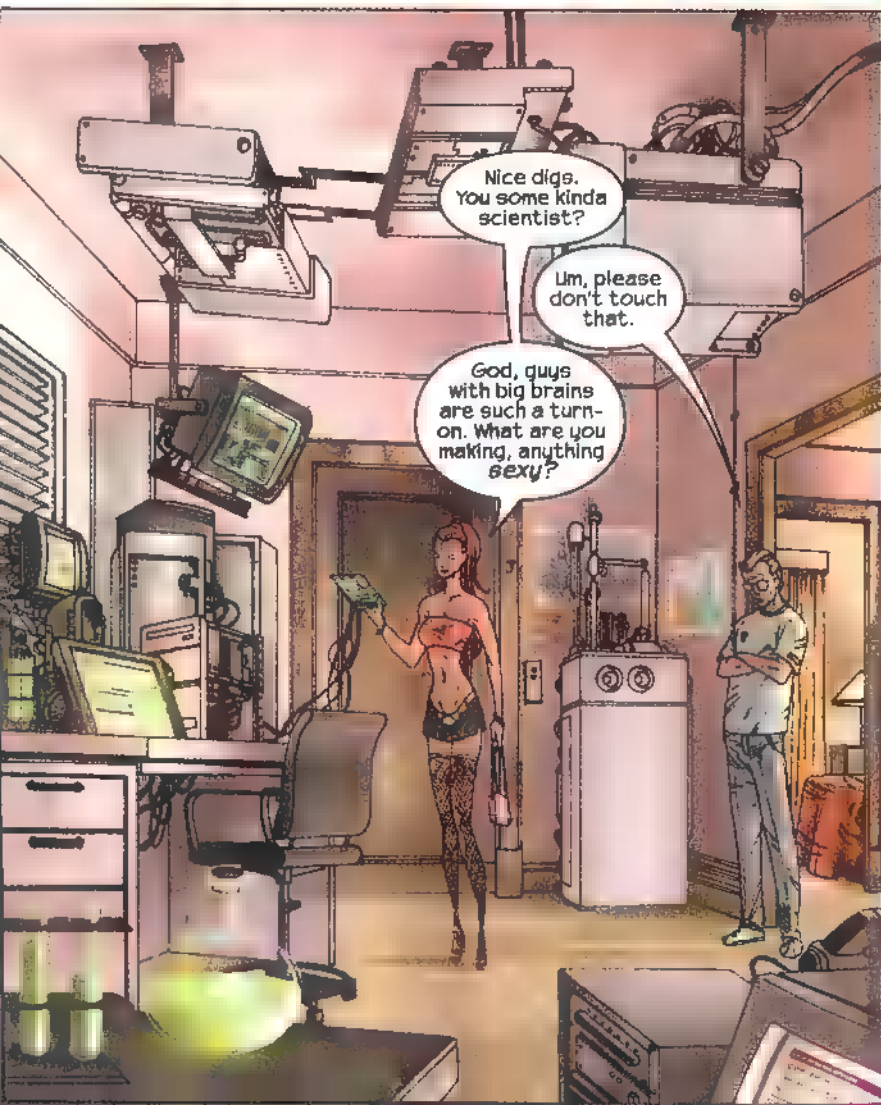
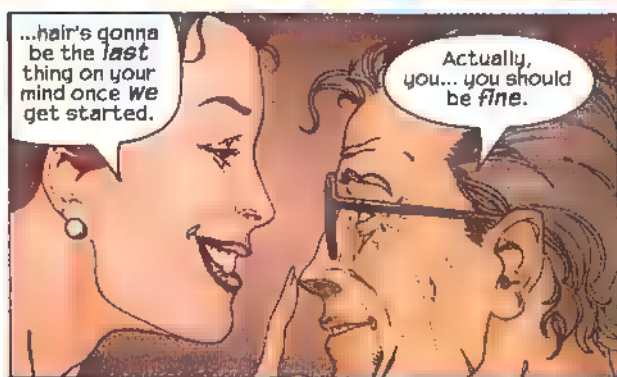
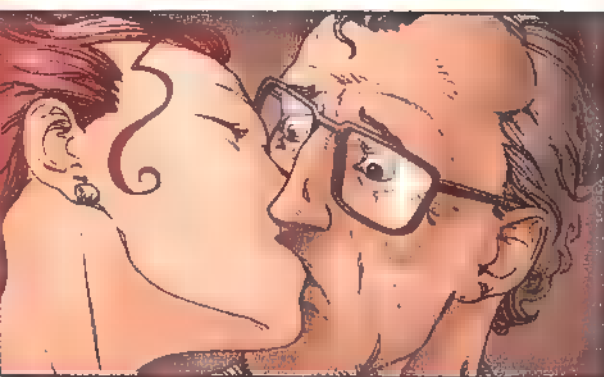




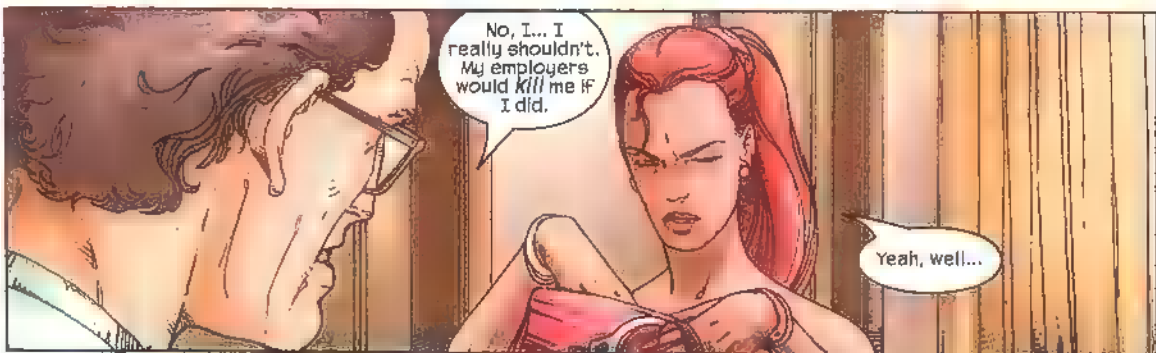
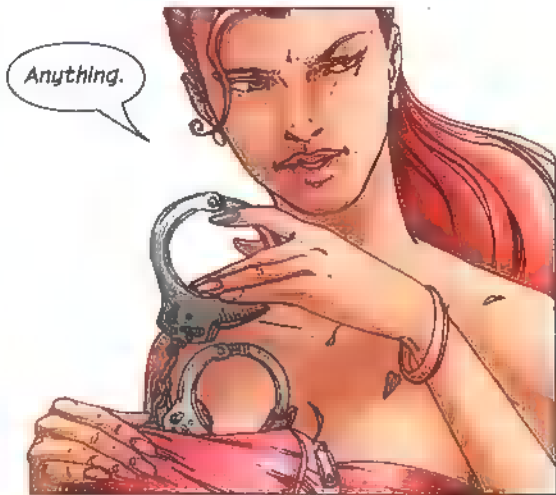
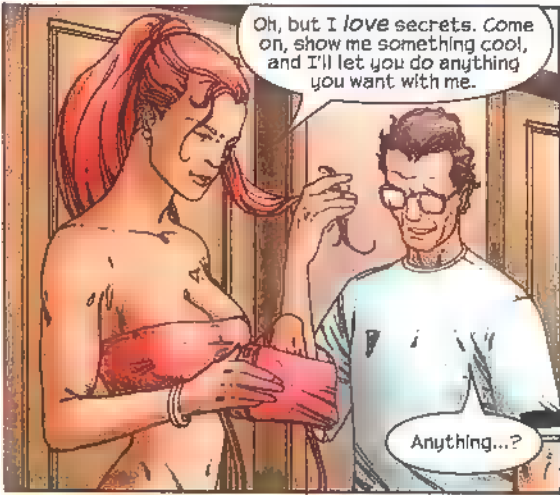
So, uh...  
what's your  
name?

Whatever  
you want it  
to be.

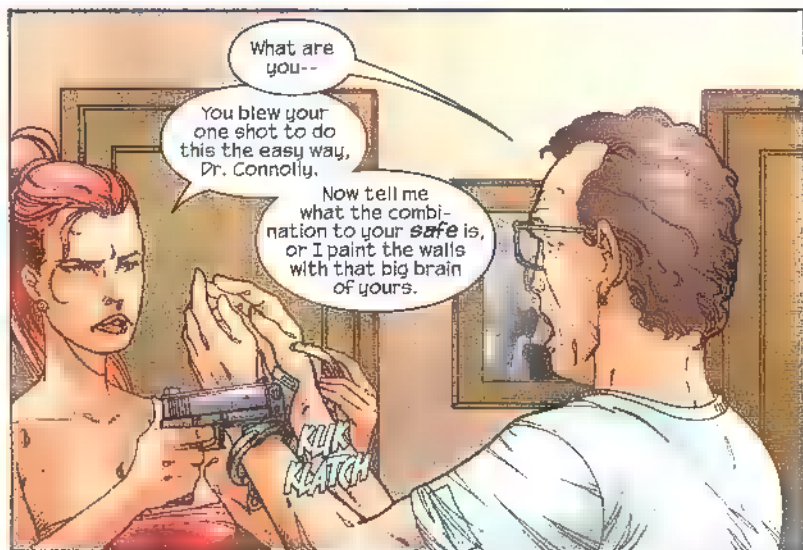












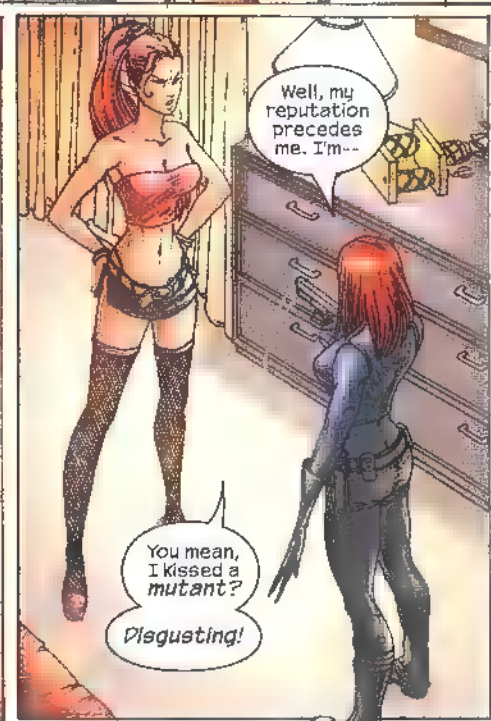
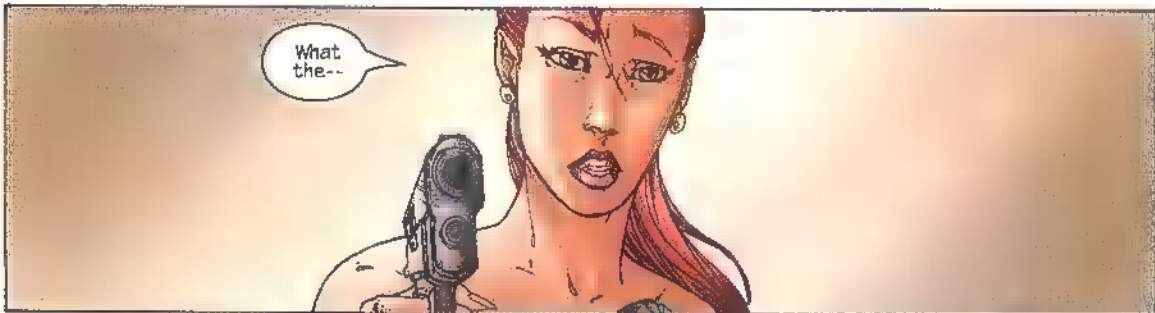




...I've  
been looking  
all over for  
that.





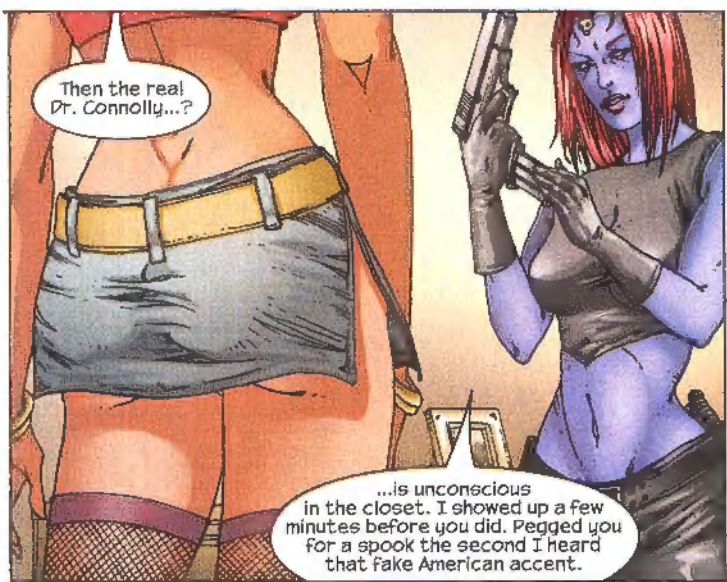






But you didn't mind kissing a woman, huh?

God, I just love open-minded girls.



Then the real Dr. Connolly...?

...is unconscious in the closet. I showed up a few minutes before you did. Pegged you for a spook the second I heard that fake American accent.



Look at you, with your bad wig and slutty get-up. What's your waistline, a fraction?

I know every chick who watches an episode of *Alias* thinks she can be a secret agent now, but what kind of third-rate outfit would hire you?

I'm not telling you anything.



Whatever, I'm gonna kill you either way.

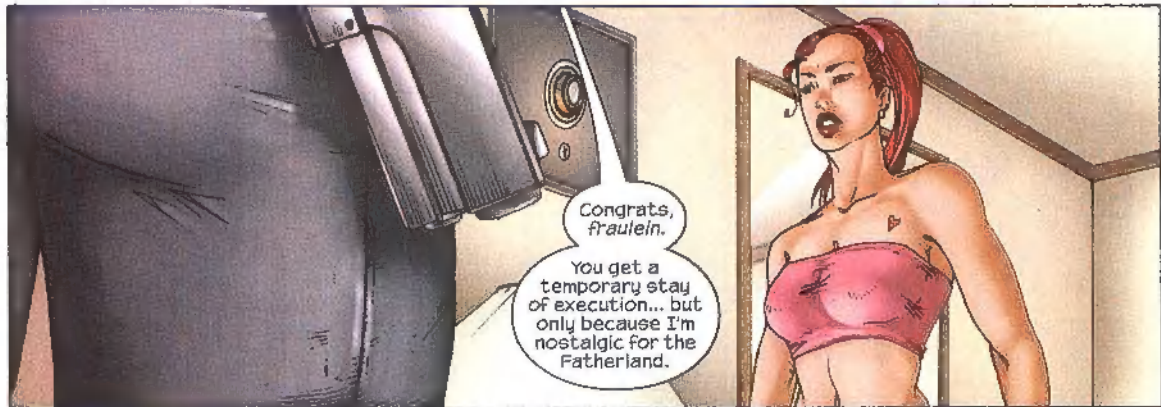
Wait!

I... I work for the A.I.D.



Austria?





Congrats, fraulein.

You get a temporary stay of execution... but only because I'm nostalgic for the Fatherland.



Tell me, what does the *Austrian Intelligence Division* want with Dr. Connolly's device?

They... they hope to use it to help hunt down shapeshifters like *you*. Apparently, you people are hard to track.

Well, good thing I got here first then, huh? My life would be a lot less fun if this gizmo ever fell into the hands of the two people who hate me-- *anyone* and *everyone*.

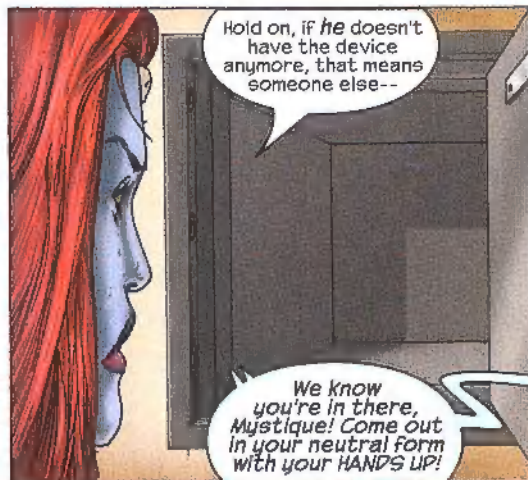


Now shut up for a second. If I enlarge my tympanic membrane, I should be able to hear the tumblers fall into place.

Annnnd...



...voila?



Hold on, if *he* doesn't have the device anymore, that means someone else--

We know you're in there, *Mystique*! Come out in your neutral form with your *HANDS UP*!



Friends of yours,  
you little rat?

No!

I am  
alone in this  
country, I... I  
swear!

Then  
beat it. I'll  
try to buy  
you some  
time.

Why are  
you--

But if I ever  
see you again, I'll  
put a bullet between  
your pretty little  
eyes. You're not cut  
out for this game,  
girl. Get out before  
somebody *takes*  
you out.

*Danke.*  
I... I don't know  
how to--

Just go!

Whoever  
these boys are,  
I'm sure I can  
handle them  
on my--



KERRASH



Enemy combatant Mystique, the President of the United States has provided us with written legal authority to *execute* you where you stand!



Ah, hell.



TO BE CONTINUED...